

Message Text

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46

ACTION ARA-10

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1924

INFO AMCONSUL CALI UNN

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT CO

SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. THE BOMBING OF A LEFTIST-MAGZINE OFFICE IN BOGOTA AND AN APPARENT EASING OF TENSION IN MEDELLIN HIGHLIGHTED THE COLOMBIAN SECURITY SCENE. A LIBERAL PARTY CONVENTION HAS BEEN CALLED FOR DEC 12, WHICH MAY FURTHER DIVIDE THE PARTY. FINANCE MINISTER BOTERO URGED RAPID ACTION ON THE BANK COLOMBIANIZATION BILL, WHICH HAS BEEN MAKING SLOW PROGRESS THROUGH CONGRESS. END SUMMARY

2. SECURITY. A TIME BOMB OF "CONSIDERABLE FORCE" EXPLODED AT THE BOGOTA OFFICES OF THE COMMUNIST-LEANING MAGAZINE ALTERNATIVA ON NOV 9, CAUSING SOME DAMAGE TO THE BUILDING. THE WEEKLY, DIRECTED BY PROMINENT WRITER GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ, HAS ATTRACTED THE IRE OF THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY BY CHARGING THE ARMED FORCES WITH CORRUPTION, AND WITH BRUTALITY IN REPRESSING DISORDER. THE FOLLOWING DAY, IN AN UNEXPLAINED AND APPARENTLY UNRELATED INCIDENT, ANOTHER BOMB EXPLODED IN A BOGOTA WORKING CLASS DISTRICT CAUSING DAMAGE TO SEVERAL BUILDINGS. THE PRESIDENTIAL PRESS OFFICE ANNOUNCED THAT THE INVESTIGATION OF THE ALTERNATIVA

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BOMBING WOULD BE PURSUED AGGRESSIVELY AND THAT GOVERN-

MENT CRITICS WOULD RECEIVE PROTECTION EQUIV TO THAT RECEIVED BY ITS SUPPORTERS. IN MEDELLIN, WHICH HAS BEEN TERRORIZED BY A WAVE OF KIDNAPPINGS, A DEGREE OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE SEEMS TO HAVE RETURNED. ONLY ONE KIDNAPPING OCCURRED DURING THE WEEK. AGGRESSIVE ACTION BY POLICE AND MILITARY RESULTED IN THE DEATHS OF SEVERAL KIDNAPPERS, AND THE GOVERNMENT APPOINTED A NEW CHIEF OF POLICE WITH A LOCAL REPUTATION FOR TOUGHNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS.

3. LIBERAL PARTY CONVENTION CALLED FOR DEC 12. THE LIBERAL PARTY'S NATIONAL DIRECTORATE (DNL), A REPORTEDLY WITH THE APPROVAL OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ, CALLED A NATIONAL PARTY CONVENTION FOR DEC 12. SUPPORTERS OF AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. JULIO CESAR TURBAY SUPPORTED THE DNL INITIATIVE, BUT REACTIONS OF LLERISTAS AND THE SO-CALLED FIRST FORCE (LOPISTA CONGRESS-EMN) RANGED FROM LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC TO HOSTILE. THE FIRST FORCE HAS AGREED TO ATTEND THE CONVENTION, WHILE THE LLERISTAS HAVE YET TO ANNOUNCE A DECISION. THE CONVENTION IS EXPECTED TO CONSIDER CHANGES IN THE PARTY'S STATUTES ADOPTED LAST SEPTEMBER (BOGOTA 8564), AND SET RULES FOR THE MID-TERM ELECTIONS AND THE 1978 CONVENTION WHICH WILL SELECT THE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. SOME LIBERAL BELIEVE A CONVENTION AT THIS TIME WOULD FURTHER DIVIDE THE PARTY, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE TURBAYISTAS CONTROL THE PARTY MACHINERY AND WOULD THEREFORE CONTROL THE CONVENTION. OTHER CONGRESSMEN HAVE SPECULATED TO THE EMBASSY THAT THE PARTY'S TRIUMVIRATE LEADERSHIP, WHICH HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH BOTH PRO-RUBAY AND PRO-LLERAS BIAS, MAY HAVE CALLED THE CONVENTION TO OBTAIN A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. THE TURBAYISTAS PROBABLY VIEW THE CONVENTION AS A MEANS OF DERAILING THE ACTIVE AND EFFECTIVE LLERAS CAMPAIGN MACHINE. A FIRST FORCE CONGRESSMAN TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT LOPEZ CONSIDERS THE PRESTIGIOUS LLERAS A CHALLENGE TO HIS OWN PARTY LEADERSHIP AND FAVORS HOLDING THE CONVENTION NOW IN ORDER TO FORCE LLERAS INTO EITHER ABIDING BY THE PARTY'S RULES OF LEAVING IT. THE CONGRESSMAN BELIEVED THAT THE LLERISTAS PROBABLY WOULD NOT ATTEND THE CONVENTION.

4. FINANCE MINISTER URGES ACTION ON BANK COLOMBIANIZATION BILL. FINANCE MINISTER BOTERO AND REPRESENTATIVES OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COLOMBIAN BANKS TESTIFIED THIS WEEK BEFORE THE SENATE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S BILL TO COLOMBIANIZE FOREIGN-OWNED BANKS. COVERING MUCH THE SAME GROUND AS IN HIS PREVIOUS STATEMENTS, BOTERO PRESSED STRONGLY FOR RAPID ACTION ON THE BILL SO THAT IT CAN BE APPROVED PRIOR TO THE END OF THE CURRENT SESSION OF CONGRESS ON DEC 12. PRESIDENT OF THE COLOMBIAN BANKING ASSOCIATION ARIAS AND PRESIDENT OF THE BANK OF BOGOTA MEJIA TESTIFIED IN

OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S BILL. ARIAS CALLED FOR CONSIDERATION OF A SERIES OF ALTERNATIVES SUCH AS PERMITTING FOREIGN BANKS TO MAINTAIN AGENCIES WITH LIMITED BANKING FUNCTIONS. MEJIA STATED TH AT THE ADMINISTRATION BILL WOULD COST THE COUNTRY MORE THAN IT WOULD GAIN.

5. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR, MEJIA ADMITTED THAT HE AND OTHERS WERE ENGAGING IN DELAYING TACTICS, HOPING TO PREVENT THE BILL FROM COMING TO A VOTE IN THIS SESSION. AT THE SAME TIME HE NOTED THAT THE CONGRESS HAS A PROPENSITY TO RUSH LEGISLATION THROUGH AT THE LAST MOMENT AND THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT MAINTAINS PRESSURE THIS BILL MIGHT INDEED PASS DURING THIS SESSION. (DETAILS REPORTED SEPTTEL.)
VAKY

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